

The Next Step by **Kamije Celeek**

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Summary: After two years of marriage, Mike and El welcome a new addition to the family. Sequel to A New Kind of Promise.

The Next Step

The nausea was what clued them in.

El was at the Wheeler house with Karen and Holly, spending the evening with her mother- and sister-in-law out of a desire to not be alone. When Mike was home from school, she stayed in the cabin—for all intents and purposes their house—but otherwise, she was either at her parents' or the Wheelers'. She was endlessly grateful that Karen was the best mother-in-law she could ask for: understanding, kind, protective of her kids regardless of blood relation, and informative. In fact, the biggest reason El came to visit was to learn recipes that she could make for herself and Mike.

She'd arrived just as Karen was pulling a batch of cookies out of the oven and immediately the smell assaulted her senses. Normally, she'd inhale and sigh at how *heavenly* the treats smelled but not this time. No, this time her stomach decided that it was equivalent to the stench of the Upside-Down and the Demogorgon. Vomit-inducing and awful. Trying not to have that reaction, she dashed to the bathroom and sat down on the toilet before Karen rapped on the door out of worry.

"El, sweetheart, are you okay?"

"I'm not feeling well," El admitted, knowing Karen likely wouldn't buy that she was fine. The older woman entered the bathroom and her face was full of worry.

"You look terrible."

"*I feel* terrible. I just... it's nothing against your cookies, but it appears my stomach has decided that it's like the smell of the Demogorgon."

"Hmm..." Karen knit her eyebrows together, a smile playing at the corners of her mouth. "I've felt like that before. And I don't think it's serious."

"You don't?"

"No, I don't. Because last time I felt like that, Holly arrived seven months later."

El's eyes widened and she stared at her mother-in-law in complete shock.

"A-are you saying I'm..."

"When was your last period?"

"January. A couple weeks before Mike came home the weekend after Valentine's."

"Okay... so the timing works. Have you been stressed out a lot or anything out of the ordinary that might make your period late?"

"No, nothing. Oh, God..." El started breathing heavily. "Mike's going to freak. Oh my God."

"Sweetheart, I need you to calm down. We don't know anything for sure yet. Let's... let's go get a pregnancy test so we can figure this out."

El nodded, still breathing slightly heavily. She was almost twenty, her birthday not coming until May, so she wasn't ready for this. Mike definitely wasn't; he'd said that he wasn't ready to be a father yet and she wasn't ready to be a mother. Panic was all that was in her mind as Karen led her up the stairs to Mike's room and let her lie on the bed before leaving. Holly came in and laid next to her, talking about things that had happened at school that week and trying to fill the empty air that was accompanying El at that moment.

Soon, Karen came back carrying a small plastic bag and shook El's shoulder gently.

"I bought a few. I-if you want to try..."

"Okay." El took the bag and went into the bathroom. There were three pregnancy tests inside, and she took a deep breath as she proceeded to take those tests. Karen came in to wait for the results so that El wouldn't be alone, recognizing her daughter-in-law's nervousness.

"I was terrified when I found out about all three of my kids coming," she said. "I hadn't been married to Ted very long when we found out about Nancy, and with Michael... well... let's just say that he didn't give me an easy time with morning sickness. And he came a month earlier than he was supposed to; his birthday was supposed to be in May, like yours. But *no*, he had to be born in April."

"He's always impatient," El giggled. "I remember when he used to come visit me back before I was allowed out. He'd run for the cabin and always forget about the damn tripwire. *That* was how I knew he was coming—because I'd hear the snap of the mousetrap and he'd start cursing. Dad thought it was hilarious."

"If... if you're worried he won't take the pregnancy well..."

"We haven't really discussed kids yet. And he pretty much told me he thinks he'll be a terrible father because he doesn't have a good role model to go off of."

"Not in his own father, maybe, but Hopper's been just as much a father to him as to you. Michael is passionate, and kind, and he has so much love to give the people he cares about. I think he'll do fine."

The egg timer Karen had brought up to mark how long they had started ringing and El took a deep breath as she reached for the first test.

Two pink lines.

Positive.

The second test. Two pink lines. And the third... two pink lines.

All three tests were positive. El was pregnant with the first baby of the next generation of the Party and she was *terrified*. Karen held her close and reassured her with kind words as she felt herself starting to mentally spiral into worst-case scenarios involving Mike rejecting her or the baby or both.

"How am I going to tell him?" she whispered.

"He's coming home for Spring Break and his birthday next week,"

Karen reminded her. "Maybe tell him then. If you want."

"That's... that's a good idea. We need to start preparing. The cabin isn't anywhere *near* suitable for a baby—oh, God. We only have one bedroom. How... how are we going to...?"

"Shh... it's okay. You and Michael have been through more than people twice your age. I think compared to an alternate dimension of monsters, raising a child is going to be easy."

El nodded, her sobs slowly subsiding as she tried to think positive.

A little piece of me and Mike... a baby.

I'm having Mike's baby.

He put a baby in me.

Initial panic beginning to vanish, it was replaced by excitement and slight terror at the new experience. She tried to connect with the baby and could sense there was something... there. Not much, obviously, but there was something.

She was going to be a mother.

Mike felt relief as he approached the cabin. His sophomore year of college was winding down, but that also meant that exams were on the horizon. Spring Break was his last chance to really relax before they arrived, so he was taking the chance to spend as much time with El for a week as possible before exams consumed his entire schedule. He knew she'd missed him, based on their phone call the day before and every phone call before that, and he'd been missing her just as much in the nearly two months since he'd last seen her. Falling asleep while cuddling on the couch, running his fingers through her hair before going to bed, teasing her... every bit of it was what made it amazing to be married to the love of his life, and he was glad to be with her every second.

"I'm home!" he called as he walked through the door. El leapt up from the couch and ran to hug him, her head barely reaching his chest as she did.

"Welcome home. I missed you," she mumbled, her face buried in his torso.

"I missed you, too, love." He bent down and tilted her chin up to kiss her and he could feel her levitating herself slightly to meet his lips.

He'd set his bag down as soon as he walked in the door, so it got knocked over as El wrapped her legs around his waist and the kissing got more heated. Mike buried his hands in her hair, which was soft and freshly washed and he *loved* the feeling of the strands between his fingers as they made out like they were in high school still. Of course, standing wasn't a long-term solution, so Mike carried her to the couch, where he proceeded to prove how unable he was to keep his hands off her when they were alone like this. He started to kiss her neck where he knew she was sensitive and she let out a groan.

"Mike..."

"I love you. Damn, I love you." He nuzzled the valley between her breasts and noted something was different.

For one, there was a faint scent that hadn't been there any of the other times he'd done this. Which was a lot. Another thing was that her breasts seemed... bigger. Squishier. Like they'd *grown* somehow in the past two months. El seemed to notice him pausing and was looking at him with concern.

"Is something wrong?"

"Your tits got bigger," he blurted like he had when they were fifteen and puberty had decided to hit them both upside the head with Steve's spiked bat and turn Mike into a puddle of teenage hormones.

"Really?"

"They're even softer. I didn't think it was possible." He buried his face in her cleavage. "I like it."

"Mike!"

"We're married. I'm not allowed to say stuff like that?"

"Just... stop being so cute!" Her cheeks were pink and he smirked, slowly moving his hands to her sides. "Mike, no. Don't you dare. M—"

He started to tickle her and she shrieked, laughing and half-heartedly trying to push him off. The sound was music to his ears after being gone so long and he took the opportunity to press more kisses to the side of her neck. She giggled and he found himself just wanting to be with her for a few minutes—to talk, sit together, cuddle, and maybe even watch a movie.

"I'm gonna go put my stuff in our room," he told her, smiling gently. "Then maybe we can watch a movie together."

"Hurry back."

Mike grabbed his suitcase and put it into their room. While he was doing that, the phone rang and he heard El answer it, her voice low so he couldn't hear exactly what she was saying. He wasn't the type to eavesdrop on his wife's phone conversations, so he sat there until he heard her hang up. Then he went out to join her.

"Everything okay?"

"Everything's fine." She smiled, but he could tell something was up.

"El... friends don't lie."

"Mike, I'm not lying."

"Something's wrong. You're being defensive."

"Okay, fine. Just... sit down and I'll tell you."

They sat down at their table—the same one where she'd so often argued with Hopper when they were younger—and El took a deep breath as he held her hands in his.

"I'm not going to beat around the bush. Mike... I'm pregnant."

His eyes widened and his grip on her hands tightened.

"I know we didn't plan on it, but I found out last week and I wanted

to tell you when you got here."

"You're pregnant?" His brain was trying to catch up.

"Yes, I'm pregnant. Three pregnancy tests and a visit to Doc Owens confirmed it. I'm about seven weeks along."

"You're pregnant."

"Mike, I know you're trying to process this because you have that same look on your face you did the morning after our first wedding. I'm pregnant and you're going to be a father."

It finally registered in Mike's brain that he'd been staring at her for the past minute, and he blinked and shook his head to snap himself out of it.

"I-I can't believe it. You're... wow." He released his grip on her hands and ran a hand through his hair.

"Are you upset?" Her voice sounded small.

"No, it's just... tall, awkward, lanky as hell Mike Wheeler married and knocked up short, graceful, and gorgeous El Hopper. It doesn't feel real."

"I haven't had a sonogram yet. Your mom said it wouldn't start to feel real until then."

"My mom knows?"

"She's the one who bought the pregnancy tests once she figured out what might be causing me to want to vomit at the smell of her cookies. Because that's not normal."

"Hell no it's not. What kind of Demogorgon are you carrying?"

"Yours, dumbass." She smiled good-naturedly and he couldn't help but smile back.

"Does the rest of our family know?"

"Just your mom. I wanted to tell you before we told my parents. And Will."

"Well, it's good to know you're going to be a widow and our child will be a half-orphan, once Hopper's done with me." She swatted his arm playfully and he laughed. "But in all seriousness, he's going to lecture the hell out of me."

"He loves you and you know it."

"Not when I got you pregnant—"

"We'll have been married for two years this June. This was going to happen at some point." She pouted and he smiled, planting another kiss on her lips.

"I'm glad it was sooner rather than later."

He had to. He had to ruin this moment. It was too perfect to pass up.

"It explains why your breasts are even more perfect now, too."

"MIKE."

"Happy birthday, El!"

She jumped as Jonathan snapped a picture, not expecting it as she walked into the Hopper house. Mike started laughing and she smacked his arm, pouting before he planted a kiss on her cheek. It had been over a month since she'd found out she was pregnant, so she was about twelve weeks along now. She'd start showing soon, according to the doctor, so the time to announce it was soon. They hadn't told anybody else about the pregnancy to keep it to themselves for a bit, but now everyone was home and she was ready.

"Twenty years old and eight years out of prison this November," Dustin joked. "How awesome is that?"

"Married for two years next month," El added with a smile. "To the best person I know."

"Save the PDA for later!" yelled Max.

"She's my *wife*, Mayfield. I can be as affectionate as I want with her."

"Shut it, Wheeler. You two are married but keep it at home." She threw her arms around her female best friend. "Happy birthday, El!"

"Thank you!"

She caught sight of Will in the next room, approaching to wish her a happy birthday while hiding something that was on the counter. Probably her birthday cake.

Her birthday celebration itself was fairly standard. They spent the day catching up with everyone and watching stupid movies in the living room when she wasn't enjoying her cake or opening her presents. It was while the celebration was winding down that she found an opportunity and the courage to announce her pregnancy to all her friends and family.

And the reactions were immediate, from Dustin grabbing El in a bone-crushing hug and asking if he could be godfather to Max teasing Mike about what *his* reaction must have been. Nancy couldn't stop smiling and Holly was squealing about how excited she was to be an aunt. Despite the enthusiastic reactions from most of their family and friends, there was still worry over Mike and El having a baby when Mike was still a sophomore in college. How would they afford anything for their new addition, or even have a place for said addition to sleep?

Mike couldn't say that those thoughts hadn't been in the front of his mind ever since El told him the news. Her due date was in mid-November, during a point where he'd be off at school and she'd be stuck in Hawkins. The thought of her being alone when she went into labor terrified him, even more so when he considered the possibility of him not being there when she gave birth because she couldn't reach him. It made his stomach twist into uncomfortable knots as he tried to think of a solution.

Then it hit him.

If he had to go to Indianapolis, then why couldn't El go with him? They were married, he had some money saved up, and there were a number of cheap apartments available near campus. She could stay there and be nearby so he didn't have to leave her behind, so far away from him and significantly decreasing the chances of him missing the baby's birth. The only roadblocks in this plan that he could think of were his mom and Hopper protesting them leaving when El was pregnant because it meant they couldn't be with her when she gave birth.

He brought up the idea with El and she agreed with it because she was tired of being separated from him all the time while he was at school. Hopper and Karen had the worry that she might go into labor while Mike was in class and unable to get to her, but El came up with a solution—somebody could stay with her for the final month or so of her pregnancy so she wouldn't be alone when she went into labor. This tipped the balance and Mike began apartment-hunting in Indianapolis. The problem was that he had no clue what he was looking for other than a two-bedroom place near his school.

"Well, you're going to want something in a good neighborhood," Karen told her son as she noticed him poring over the real-estate listings. "Two bedrooms, one bath, good neighborhood. Preferably with a park so El can get some exercise without driving anywhere. Oh, and you should look into childcare options for when the baby's older..."

"Wow, really?"

"You need to look at every aspect of an apartment before you make a decision. It's good practice for when you and El buy your first house in a few years."

"Should I bring El with me to look?"

"Of course. She'll be living there, too; it's only fair she have a say in what apartment the the two of you end up renting. Speaking of which, you *do* have a way of paying rent, don't you?"

"I have a job. And El and I have some money saved up that we can use."

"I just worry about you two, being so far away..."

"It's Indianapolis, not Chicago." Mike smiled to reassure her, but his skin was prickling with nervousness and excitement.

They found their apartment and moved in a month before his junior year started.

"How the hell did I get roped into this?"

El giggled as Steve set down his suitcase.

As per her suggestion, someone was going to stay with them for a while until the baby was born, just in case she went into labor early so she wouldn't be alone. Between differing schools for all her friends, jobs for her parents and in-laws, and Mike having classes, Steve was the only person who was able to stay with her in the apartment. He was still getting his paycheck from Hopper as a police officer, though, as a thank-you for doing the huge favor of ensuring the first Wheeler baby of the next generation arrived safely and with as little incident as possible.

"Seriously, your husband owes me for this."

"Not excited to be a grandma?"

"Okay, I am, but that's besides the point. Is Baby Wheeler okay?"

"Moving around a lot. That's normal, though, at least according to the doctor." Steve stretched and brought his suitcase into the nursery, where El and Mike had set up a small bed for him to sleep on. "Sorry we don't have a proper guest room..."

"It's not a problem. Now, let me figure all this out. You sit down on the couch and just relax."

She nodded and sat down, looking at her swollen belly and smiling.

"Do you know if the baby's a boy or a girl?" Steve asked.

"I think it's a boy. Mike says girl. Guess we'll see when the time

comes."

"Just try and wait until your husband's out of college before you have another one, okay?"

El laughed. That was the plan—no more babies until Mike had graduated. She and Mike did want more kids, but not too quickly.

"You must be excited for the anniversary this week, right?"

"Anniversary?"

"November 7 is on Thursday. The anniversary of the day you two met?"

"Oh, right. I can't believe I forgot."

"Don't sweat it, Ellie. I'm sure Mike forgot, too. It's been eight years since you guys met now. You don't have to celebrate it every year."

El relaxed and rested a hand on her belly.

I can't wait to meet you, little one...

With only a week to go, El was getting restless. Mike and Steve tried their best to keep her from going stir-crazy, but the fact that Baby Wheeler liked to move when their mom was trying to sleep didn't help things. El was irritable and snippy with everyone, including Mike, and Steve had witnessed more than one post-blowup meltdown from El in the past week. She'd always cry after getting short with Mike because she felt guilty and her husband would be reassuring her until she stopped. Those little moments always ended with Steve toasting extra Eggos for the mother-to-be because *dammit, they made her feel better*.

Steve noticed, though, that towards the anniversary, El seemed a little more well-rested. When he inquired about it, she simply shrugged and said the baby was less active. Still moving, but not as much. Since she was the mom and he knew nothing about pregnancy (he was a cop, not a doctor, for a reason), he brushed it off as normal pregnancy stuff.

Then on the morning of November 7, it happened.

Mike left for class after kissing El goodbye, like he did every day, and he kissed her belly, too. Steve thought he was going to get cavities from how sweet it was. Then El went to the couch and laid down, balancing her copy of *Anne of Green Gables* on her belly while she read it. The Babysitter turned on some music while he took care of any of the housework El couldn't do on her own. He heard El get up after a while and the bathroom door closing. And there was a little gasp.

"Steve!" she called, urgency in her voice. He dropped what he was doing and ran into the bathroom to find her holding her belly in pain, a puddle of reddish liquid on the ground.

"Ellie, what's wrong?!"

"My water broke. The baby's coming."

They'd been over what to do so many times that Steve started moving on instinct. His first priority was to get El to the damn car and over to the hospital. Despite her weight gain thanks to the baby (something Dustin had learned the hard way not to comment on), she was still relatively light and easy to carry. Even when he was juggling her hospital bag and her favorite book, he managed to get her to the car and drive while she tried to keep calm. Once that was done and El was in the hands of the hospital staff (she was only three centimeters dilated), it was time for priority two: letting Mike know the baby was coming.

"If the baby starts coming while I'm in class, I want you to run like hell to get me once El's safely at the hospital. I don't fucking care what class it is; you run and tell me because I'm not missing my daughter being born."

And Steve did run like hell. He threw open the door to Mike's World Civ class and the professor stopped her lecture just to look at him.

"Excuse me, who are you?" she asked, annoyed. Steve ignored her and nodded to Mike, whose face had gone even paler than usual.

"It's time," the former player stated. Mike shoved his notes and his

other materials into his backpack and slung it over his shoulder, rushing towards Steve and down the hall to the parking lot where Steve had left the car idling.

"Is she okay?!"

"She's at the hospital. She was only three centimeters when I left."

"Holy shit... this is happening." Mike sank into the passenger seat as Steve shifted the car into drive. "I'm going to be a dad. Holy fucking shit. I'm not ready. Fuck. I'm not ready. I'm going to fuck this up."

"Can you keep calm for five minutes?! Your wife needs you!"

"Right. Sorry!"

At the hospital, Mike and Steve were shown to where El was waiting. Sweat was already pouring down her face and she was breathing heavily. Mike immediately grabbed her hand, his face creased with worry.

"El, I'm here."

"It hurts," she whimpered.

"I know. Fuck, I'm sorry it hurts." He kissed her hair gently and Steve waved.

"I'll go make some calls. I'll be back."

He rifled through his pockets and found enough change to make the calls he needed to—the friends and family who have been waiting for the baby and waiting for the call that said baby was on the way. Hopper, Karen, and Joyce were on the way to Indianapolis themselves, with Holly in tow.

Baby Wheeler was coming.

"El, love, you're doing great! Just hold on!"

"Mike... I love you, but shut the fuck up!"

Her voice was tinged with venom and he shut his mouth, knowing that she was talking out of pain. She'd been in labor for seven hours already and it was taking a toll. He didn't care about what she said. All he cared about was her delivering the baby so their family could be complete.

"All right, sweetheart, I'm gonna need you to push!" the nurse stated. "I can see the baby's head!"

"You ready?" Mike whispered.

"Ready..." El gripped his hand tightly.

"On the count of three, push. One... two... three!"

El screamed as she struggled to push, nearly crushing Mike's hand in the process. She fell back, panting.

"Again. One... two... three!"

The lights flickered slightly this time, El's voice reaching a level Mike had never heard from her.

"One more time. One... two... three!"

El's screams mingled with another sound after a few moments: the hiccupping cry of a newborn baby. It was over. The baby had arrived. El panted heavily and realized she was still gripping Mike's hand. She let go so he could regain circulation.

"It's a healthy baby girl," the nurse announced, handing the squirming infant to the mother. The girl wailed and squirmed, but El cradled her baby to her chest. Within moments, the newborn stopped crying and hiccupped.

"Told you she was a girl," Mike laughed.

"Michael!"

"She's perfect. Just like her mom."

"I don't look perfect right now."

"El, are you kidding me? You always look perfect." He kissed her gently and she started giggling.

Once the cord was cut and the baby cleaned and swaddled, she was put back into El's arms. Within a few minutes, though, the exhaustion caught up to El and she ended up falling asleep after handing the baby to Mike, who cradled his daughter with a smile.

"Hey," he whispered. "I'm your dad. Welcome to the big bad world, baby girl. There's a lot to see. And your mom and I are happy to have you."

"Your hand okay, Wheeler?"

Mike looked up at the sound of Hopper's voice. He was sitting in a chair by El's bed while she slept, their daughter having been brought to the hospital nursery so she could sleep a couple hours earlier. It was then he noticed the heavy bruising on his hand where El had gripped it during labor. It didn't hurt, though.

"Yeah, I'm fine." He waved it off. "But I won. It's a girl."

"I have a granddaughter." Hopper smirked. "How's it feel to be a dad?"

"Surreal. She's so... *tiny*. And fragile. It's kind of terrifying."

"Just wait until she gets older and boys start getting involved. Then you'll *really* worry." Mike's heart pounded.

"Oh, fucking God, I'm so sorry."

"Don't be. You're one of the good ones. Most girls have to kiss a few frogs before they find their prince. El found hers on the first try."

Mike didn't know if that was an insult (*Frog-Face!*) or not but he didn't care.

A few minutes later, El woke up and wanted to see the baby. It appeared that mother and daughter were still on a closely-linked schedule, since the nurse brought the baby in and announced that she

needed to eat. Hopper respectfully stepped out and let Mike and El be alone with their daughter for a few minutes.

"What should we name her?" Mike asked.

"You won. Your choice." El sounded jokingly resentful.

"Well, I have no clue for her first name. I want her middle name to be Jane, though. After you."

"If it were my choice, I'd say Anne. I was reading *Anne of Green Gables* and listening to music when she decided it was time to come out."

"How about Melody, then?"

"Melody?"

"Melody Jane Wheeler?"

"Hm... I like it. And we can call her Melly for short. Or Mels." She looked down at the baby, who'd stopped suckling and was now trying to focus her eyes. "What do you think? Melody Jane?"

The baby gurgled and El nodded.

"Melody Jane Wheeler it is."

"Where's my granddaughter?" asked Karen, entering the room with a bright smile and an equally-excited Holly.

"Right here, Mom," Mike replied.

"Oh, she's *beautiful*..." El willingly let Karen hold Melody, who squirmed under her blanket. "Have you picked her name yet?"

"Just did. Mom, this is Melody Jane Wheeler."

"That's *pretty*!" Holly stage-whispered, eyes wide. "I hope she looks like El when she gets older..."

"Holly!" Karen hissed.

"No, I agree with her," Mike told his mother. "I want Melly to look

like her mom because El's the attractive one in this marriage."

"Mike!" El protested, blushing.

"What? It's true!"

"Don't sell yourself short, Mike."

"I don't think anything about me is *short*, love."

Holly started giggling and Melody let out a hiccup before crying. Karen handed her back to El, who cradled the baby in her arms.

Over the next couple days while El recuperated from giving birth, there was a near-constant stream of visitors to see both her and the new baby. Hopper, surprisingly, nearly broke down in tears when he held Melody for the first time. Dustin declared her the newest member of the Party. Even Max got a little choked up holding who she called 'Mileven Junior'. And when Mike and El went home, Steve stayed for an extra couple days to help them out with Melody before going back to Hawkins. Mike found himself exhausted most days and feeling guilty because he had classes while El had to stay home with Melody.

Still, when the semester was over, he and El headed home to Hawkins, where their families would be spending the holidays together. They'd been home for Thanksgiving, where Nancy had cooed over Melody, and they were surprised to discover that Hopper and Steve had renovated the cabin with an extra bedroom and decorated for the newest addition.

And now it was Christmas Eve. Mike laid on the couch, El cuddled next to him and Melody asleep on his chest. Her breathing was steady and he couldn't help but marvel at where he was. *This* was the life he'd wanted with El since he was twelve. Them, happily married with a family and able to sleep peacefully without the worry of shadowy government agencies or creatures from other dimensions invading that peace. El was safe. Melody was a happy baby. And he was the luckiest guy on the planet.

Okay, so this one-shot was a follow-up to my story "A New Kind of Promise", which is part of my "For the Dancing and the Dreaming" series on AO3. And yes, the title of the series was inspired by the song from "How to Train Your Dragon 2". This series also contains "A Bedtime Story for Holly" and "You're In My Head Like A Catchy Song". Basically, every one-shot in the series takes place in the regular universe and are part of the same continuity. Got it? Good.

Melody Jane Wheeler makes her first official appearance!

I picked the name Melody just because I like it a lot and I feel like it's a pretty name. Jane is self-explanatory. But Melly is the first of Mike and El's kids. Me introducing her is important because I'm planning a multi-chapter fic where she's a major player and I wanted to give her a good introduction before that.

So long and thanks for all the fish!